

# The C E A CRITIC

Formerly THE NEWS LETTER of the College English Association

Vol. X—No. II

BROOKLYN COLLEGE—BROOKLYN 10, NEW YORK

APR 21 1948

February, 1948

## New York State C.E.A.

A report of the highly successful meeting held last fall at Colgate University never reached the editor. Professor Koller's address at that meeting appears elsewhere in this issue. Officers elected were:

President: Ellsworth Barnard, Alfred University

Vice President: George Kahrl, Elmira College

Secy.-Treas.: Miriam Small, Wells College

Directors: Joan Lyon, Skidmore College; Henry Ten Eyck Perry, University of Buffalo; Kathrine Koller, University of Rochester.

## Spring Meeting

This C. E. A. group is planning a meeting at Wells College, Aurora-on-Cayuga, on May 1. There will be an afternoon session and an evening session. The afternoon meeting beginning at 3:00 will be a round table discussion on the subject: "Introducing College Students To Literature". The evening session will be a dinner meeting. Full details in a later issue.

## Middle Atlantic C.E.A.

Spring Meeting—April 17, 1948

Place: Goucher College Alumnae Lodge, 1 East 24th Street, Baltimore.

General Topic: Teaching English to the Non-Specialist.

10:45 A. M. Call to Order by President Raymond D. Havens.

Scholarship and The Art of Teaching—by Louis Teeter, George Washington University. Discussion led by L. Giovannini, Catholic Univ.

English Among the Liberal Arts—by Ford K. Brown, St. John's College. Discussion led by F. D. Cooley, Univ. of Maryland.

Election of Officers for 1948-1949.

1:00 P. M. Luncheon for those who attend the meeting. This will be tendered by President and Mrs. David A. Robertson of Goucher. Notice of intention to attend must be sent Prof. Elizabeth Nitchie, Goucher College, Baltimore (18), Md., by April 15. Luncheon Speaker: Karl Shapiro. Subject: Teaching The Poetic Process.

## Description of a Survey Course in Action

English 103, the course taken by most of the freshmen at Cornell College, is listed in our catalogue as freshman composition and literature. "Reading and class discussion," says the description, "serve as a basis for exercise in composition. The course aims to be corrective where it need be, but also to develop judgment and appreciation where it can." (There is another course, 101, for those who have made the lowest scores in the placement tests.)

As we observed students coming into college it seemed to us that the quality most lacking in them was any comprehension of what the role of literature is. To most of them, literature was a lot of chatter, interesting or uninteresting, comprehensible or incomprehensible, about this and that. They had been anthologized into chaos.

The world is full of "why" books. For our modest task we set ourselves a "how." How have human beings behaved? The description of their behavior is literature. Sometimes literature tells why, too, in an unscientific but nevertheless truthful way. What we wanted to do was to trace those hows and whys—to show that the how of one period and people often became the why of the next, to show where an idea had been born, whither it had traveled, and what it was up to among us today.

Since the ideas of their own day are naturally more accessible for eighteen-year-olds than the ideas of by-gone times, we began with contemporary America. For several years we were able to obtain reprints of the anniversary issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature* called "Literature Between Two Wars." Around the critical and historical essays in the review we assembled a group of readings selected as far as possible to illustrate the trends in writing assessed in it. These selections included three novels, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Babbitt*; a volume of plays, which included writing by O'Neill, Odets, Anderson, Rice, Wilder, and others representative of the period; a volume of recent short stories; and a group of poems which we se-

(Continued on Page 5)

## What Goes On In "English I"

Despite occasional bold experiments, the content of the required course in Freshman English in various colleges is fairly well standardized. But the emphasis on different items almost invariably included in the course varies greatly from institution to institution. There is no characteristic difference among courses offered in private, municipal, and state colleges, nor do the Freshman English courses offered in colleges of one region differ fundamentally from those in another. Many English departments are dissatisfied with the courses they conduct and are considering changes.

These observations are based on answers to a questionnaire recently sent out to colleges mainly in the Southwest, but with samplings from points as widespread as Middlebury College in Vermont, the University of Michigan, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Florida.

In order to see just what the average student is confronted with, let us follow him into a hypothetical average Freshman English course. When he has had just time enough to park his bags in his dormitory room, he is almost sure to be herded into an auditorium and given an examination in English. It will probably be one of a number of nationally known standardized placement or achievement tests some form of which he may already have taken in high school, although there is an outside chance that it will have been compiled by the English department at the college. In one out of four institutions, if his score is high enough—though that is improbable since he is only an average student—he will be excused from taking Freshman English. Such a grade at the University of Alabama or the University of Mississippi would land him in a special "fast" section. Elsewhere he has a little better than even chance of being registered in a section with classmates whose test scores indicate ability comparable to his own.

He will meet with these classmates three fifty-minute periods a week throughout two semes-

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## The Functions of the College English Dept.

"What are the functions of a college English department," I asked the members of the staff who were in the office when I turned from the phone after accepting Mr. Lawson's invitation to speak this evening. "Like Caesar's wife," murmured one, "to be all things to all people." I can agree with that slightly ribald remark if we may interpret it to mean that in English studies we find all the disciplines and riches of the humanities where he who seeks may find the answer to many of his questions about the meaning and significance of this life.

If I may follow the Elizabethans and paraphrase the ancients, I shall say that the aim of English studies is to teach and to delight, and to do both for the relief of man's estate. There is a great need to consider the functions of any department today in terms of what education must do and what it can do.

For example, can the course I had in the history of the English novel be justified today? Pages read from Raleigh and Baker unacknowledged by the professor (only a chance visit to the library revealed all to me) and a series of factual quizzes, "who was Smellfungus", taught me the catch phrases about fore-runners of the English novel, realism, naturalism, but nothing about criticism or modern writers such as Virginia Woolf or Joyce. I cannot believe that such a specialized factual history of a type can be justified in education today. What does this have to do with war, hunger, economic struggles, the question of what to do with the great scientific forces which we have in our hands and what to do with the human energy which mechanical force can set free? What constitutes an ethical code today? What is integrity? What is social integrity? These are the problems which concern us now. Bunyan and Defoe may have something to teach us about these problems not because they are the forerunners of the novel, but because they have much to say about human nature and because their way of saying it is charged with emotion or conviction or merely because they awaken us to think about problems of living.

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# THE CEA CRITIC

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J. GORDON EAKER, Jersey City  
Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Published Nine Times a Year, Sep-  
tember through May at Brooklyn,  
New York  
for the

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is for subscription of the CEA CRITIC.  
Subscription for Libraries \$1.50.

Application for entry as Second Class  
matter at Brooklyn, N. Y., is pending.

## The Place of Letters

### In Liberal Education

The study of literature is central to liberal education because:

1. Reading is an almost universal source of pleasure. The enjoyment of some reading (magazine fiction, detective stories, popular novels, and the like) requires no study; but for the full enjoyment of the best literature of all epochs, study is necessary.

2. Literature arrests the rapid flow of experience, holds it up for contemplation and understanding. It removes us momentarily to new worlds, and returns us to the familiar with fresh awareness. What was ours becomes more ours, and we recognize the familiar for the first time. Literature reveals the complexity of human character—the working of desires and motives, the traits in which men are alike and different. It explores the meaning of men's relations to one another; it reveals the connection of character and destiny.

3. Literature makes real the continuity of past with present by helping to explain the societies that have existed at any time and how they came to be.

4. In showing forth the vari-

ous kinds of life, evil as well as heroic, literature reveals the moral problems and meanings of experience. It therefore acquaints the student with moral choice and the consequence of action. Proper teaching of literature should create in the student a resistance on the one hand, to corrosive cynicism, and on the other, to narrow and unenlightened fanaticism. It should make him aware of the variety as well as the constancy of moral responses to experience. The full understanding of a piece of literature entails the commitment of one's affections and sometimes even one's beliefs, and thus the effect of the intensive study of literature should be growth in the extent and clarity of one's allegiances. So literary study, both secular and religious, provides moral enlightenment by making more elaborate and more firm the understanding of what it is to be human.

From Report Com. on Lib.  
Educ., A.A.C., Assn. Am. Col.  
Bull., XXXIII, 4, Dec. '47.

## What Sort of Person, The English Teacher?

Regardless of the "level" at which we function as teachers of English, regardless of the immediate subject-matter, we should exemplify the virtue of magnanimity — of largeness of mind and spirit, or in William Hazlitt's expression, of "comprehensiveness of soul." This inclusive characteristic implies justice tempered by the Biblical compassion, loving-kindness, charity, or love. It includes historic imagination and philosophic perspective.

To be large-minded does not necessitate that we be long-headed. As Chesterton pointed out in his witty criticism of Arnold's notion of the grand style: one does not have to be solemn in order to be serious. Humor, the comic spirit, when that grace is given us, is to be welcomed.

Nor should largeness of spirit be restricted to English teachers, or for that matter, to teachers in general. Yet it is particularly within our province; for as teachers of literature, of literary masterpieces, we are frequently and intimately brought into touch with largeness of spirit, with the great potentialities of human nature. As Longinus put it, sublimity is the "echo of the great soul". Greatness of mind is, or should be, the very stuff with which we work. If, moreover, we try to make this largeness of spirit our essential orientation, and if we enjoy even a portion of it, we shall find that it directs or

saturates whatever subject we may at the moment be teaching—from *King Lear* to the predicate adjective.

But we must not seduce ourselves into pseudo-magnanimity, into thinking that by merely entering emotionally and imaginatively into the literary masterpieces, and by imitating the greatness of that work for the edification of our students, we ourselves absorb comprehensiveness and become, to a degree, great-minded.

John Henry Newman, in one of his "Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations", points out that there are writers who, through an effort of the emotions and the imagination, may capture and transmit to their readers moral and spiritual experiences (specifically Christian grace) which, in the lives of others, may be realities, but which, for them, are merely make-believe. Newman concludes:

"And thus it often happens, that those who seem so amiable and good and so trustworthy, when we only know them by their writings, disappoint us so painfully, if at length we come to have a personal acquaintance with them. We do not recognize in the living being the eloquence or the wisdom which so enchanted us. He is rude, perhaps, and unfeeling; he is selfish; he is dictatorial, he is sensual, he is empty-minded and frivolous; while we in our simplicity had antecedently thought him the very embodiment of purity and tenderness, or an oracle of heavenly truth."

I think of a like pattern of experience when I suggest that we teachers who do profess great-mindedness and who traffic in it, need to be on our guard against pseudo-magnanimity, for, in effect, this makes of us asses parading in a lion's skin, and it causes at least twofold harm. First, it encourages in us a false conceit of moral and spiritual excellence. Second, it is likely to have bad effects on our students. The more discerning among them will recognize, during our interpretive mimicry and histrionics, or immediately afterwards, that we ourselves are hollow vessels—temporary containers and vehicles of a largeness of spirit we do not really possess. The less discerning, as they mature, may come to the same conclusion—months, years later. As a result of the disillusionment that follows the recognition, these students may lose whatever positive humanistic values they may temporarily have experienced when we, the teachers, acted as cultural middlemen in the classroom.

In what has so aptly been called his "Biographia Literaria", Milton tells how he—

"was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that which is praiseworthy." (Apology for Smectymnus)

To expect this lofty dedication, experience, and practice of magnanimity of us English teachers would, I realize, be asking too much. It would be asking that we become so many Homers, Dantes, or Miltons. But is it too much to ask of ourselves that we be thoroughly persuaded of the great worth of this quality, and that we try to have it permeate and sublimate our teachings and our own lives as well as the lives of our students?

Akin to pseudo-magnanimity is another occupational disease which is likely to debilitate us English teachers as we work with the very stuff of greatness of spirit. It might be called *vicarious magnanimity*. It is a subtle form of moral self-indulgence. It rests content with an inoperative emotional and imaginative magnanimity stimulated through association with great literature, but not productive of "fruits" of character. It omits the final link in a chain which should extend from greatness of idea and sentiment to corresponding greatness of character and action. It is a kind of short-circuited or involuted magnanimity. It gives us the delights of large ideas, noble sentiments, lofty ideals, without exacting of us the price to be paid for the privilege of all this flattering grandeur of heart, this exaltation of imagination and intellect. At bottom it is sentimentality, as Chesterton has defined that term: indulgence in immediately pleasurable and otherwise gratifying emotions without accepting the duties and responsibilities which go with these feelings.

The New Sciences have provided marvelously delicate or powerful techniques, processes, and instruments—mental and physical; but there still remains the problem of the right use of these ingenious discoveries and inventions. The virtue of magnanimity, with its more specific attributes, provides a directive and a "telos" for the utilization of our *novum organum*—on behalf of civilization and human



ity. Further, it fosters that total habit of mind or, as Hazlitt called it, "temper of mind" — which we so sorely need in our desperate efforts to articulate a world consciousness and a world community.

Especially in this post-war period (which many already regard as the prelude to the next war!), when so much stress is placed upon what is immediately and tangibly useful, and when there is widespread cynicism as to the worth of the moral and social intangibles suggested by the term "magnanimity", we teachers of English must try to make this virtue dominantly current. For it gives to man some of his chief claims to dignity, respect, and hope.

**MAXWELL H. GOLDBERG**  
University of Massachusetts  
Professor Goldberg's paper was adapted from a talk given at the fall conference of the N. E. Assn. of Teachers of English.

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### I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Assistant Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

#### STANFORD SHORT STORIES: 1946.

Ed. Wallace Stegner. Stanford University Press, 1947. ix: 107 pp. \$2.00.

Stanford Short Stories: 1946 is a first year's harvest from The Stanford Writing Center Program, supported by a \$75,000 five-year fellowship and prize grant from Dr. Edward H. Jones and directed by Wallace Stegner (Remembering Laughter, The Big Rock Candy Mountain), who came to Stanford cross-continent from Harvard.

The slender volume contains ten stories, two each by five young authors, three men and two women. Short biographical sketches of the authors are appended. According to Professor Stegner in his Preface, all these stories "are not amateur performances, but professional, or so nearly professional as to confuse a critic." Stegner goes on to say, "Any writing program in a university must justify itself ultimately by its ability to produce professional writers." Actually, six of the ten had won previous publication, three in nationally recognized magazines. The others, Stegner implies, were deserving, but were too experimental or violated mass-circulation taboos. "A university is an area of free intellectual inquiry, but a magazine with a large circulation is not."

All the stories are readable. They are smooth, finished writing, with very few touches of amateurism, such as the violation of point of view which I noticed in one. Perhaps the point of "A Stranger's Funeral" might be clearer; the symbolism of "Who Made This Subway?" will baffle some, or necessitate a second reading. None are great literature, but perhaps this is too much to expect of the contemporary short story, done in college or elsewhere. Of them all, I believe only "Dom Pedro's Crown" makes no pretense to values beyond mere entertainment; certainly most have social, or sociological, implications.

What strikes me most is the extremely contemporary nature of the subject matter. Despite

what some writers' market guide say, the demand for war-material stories must be good. All of the six stories by men are the work of veterans, and all incorporate war-time experiences. Of the stories by women, those of Miss Byers have no pronounced contemporary flavor, but those of Mrs. Bellows do. Not one of the ten stories chronicles normal, happily-adjusted, adult life even in the denouement. Five include references to violations of traditional morality. Alcoholic beverages figure in eight and sleeping potions in the other two. The war and the first of the peace must have greatly increased the demand for both stimulants and sedatives. The authors of these stories are highly conscious of "the turbulence of the times," but the atomic age is recognized, I believe, only in one lone reference to Hiroshima.

The biographical sketches show that all the stories derive with remarkable directness from the recent experiences of their authors, who have seen a good deal of the world. Once again we observe that the material of fiction is life, though art must still add its adornments. I am left wondering why the ten stories do not represent ten authors instead of five, and why there is no non-war story by a man. Subsequent annual volumes will doubtless be watched by the publishers, but should be of at least as much interest to teachers of English. There are no islands any more.

Cecil B. Williams  
Oklahoma A. & M. College

**THE POETIC IMAGE**, by Cecil Day Lewis, Oxford University Press, New York, 1947. 157 pp., \$3.00.

Reading this book was a depressing experience for me. Without conscious intention, I am sure, Mr. Day Lewis convinced this reader at least that he must be a sort of poet himself in order to understand much modern poetry, and also books about it. To be sure, Mr. Day Lewis says that he has tried to weed out all jargon, and he laughs gently at critics of poetry who "live very largely by annotating, codifying, refining, transmogrifying, or delicately wincing at" the "coarse and fundamental" truths of poetry. However, in spite of this welcome objectivity and humor Mr. Day Lewis frequently gets involved in the inevitable abstractions and even in the deep well of the poet's unconscious. He quotes with approval Walter Raleigh's remark that "you cannot lecture on really pure poetry any more than you can talk about the ingredients of pure water," but Mr. Day Lewis

persists in trying despite the warning. However, the fact that I could not follow him all the way is not necessarily a criticism of the book; I feel sure that other readers with better, or at least different, equipment will find much that is illuminating and even profound.

The chapters which I believe will be most generally useful are two in which the author stands back a little from the images themselves and considers his subject in more or less historical perspective. The first of these, "The Field of Imagery", surveys types and theories of imagery in English poetry and criticism during the last four hundred years. The other chapter which views images against a larger background is the one entitled "The Living Image". In this Mr. Day Lewis discusses "some of the difficulties confronting the poet who wishes to be modern," and in so doing throws much light on the aims and methods of his colleagues and contemporaries.

JOHN K. REEVES  
Skidmore College

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#### Taos Field School of the Arts

The Univ. of New Mexico is sponsoring an integrated course of Study in Literature, Music, and Painting at Taos, June 12 to Aug. 7, 1948. Enrollment limited to 20 men and 20 women. Cost, including Dormitory Fee, \$140.00. Write Dr. Daryle E. Keefer, U. of N. M., Albuquerque.

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# UNUSUAL WORDS AND HOW THEY CAME ABOUT, by Edwin Radford (Philosophical Library, 1946). \$3.75.

This book carries on the 19th century tradition of the Isn't-it-perfectly-amazing school of research. As a bewildering pot-pourri of scholarship, conjecture, bias, and digression it deserves a place just beyond Archbishop Trench on *The Study of Words*. Mr. Radford takes a quaint stand on linguistic change: "Xylonite. Is the correct name for celluloid." "Aisle. A much mis-used word. It should not be used to describe the central nave of a church. . . . It applies rightly only to the wings or wing of the church, aisle being French for wing. . . ." Papists are put in their place: they are told that Pope comes from "the Greek infantile word for father"; readers are solemnly assured that people who are granted an audience with the Holy Father get a chance to kiss his foot (p. 131). At other times the author lets himself go on such unusual entries as "Sleep. Scientists estimate that during an eight hours' sleep the average human being changes position at least thirty-five times" and "Bible. There are more acres in Yorkshire than there are letters in the Bible." Further amusement is furnished by blunders like "Magnun opus", Skeats for Skeat, Ye for Y, and a reference to the Greek word *sol* for sun.

It is worth remembering that Walter Skeat's reliable and scholarly *Concise Etymological Dictionary* (Oxford Press) is just as interesting, three times as big, and costs about a dollar less.

GEORGE S. McCUE  
Colorado College

**THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**, by G. A. Sambreok, M.A. (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1947, 110 pp. \$.60).

One who has neglected the study of the English language will be easily enticed to read this little book in the *Essential English Library*, intended mainly for foreign students, but also of unusual interest to English readers.

Short, illustrated chapters discuss the most interesting words contributed by the Romans, Celts, Danes, and Normans, and trace the transformation of Middle English into the richness and variety of Modern English. We also learn how new words are made, how to use the dictionary, and something about slang.

J. G. E.

**THE USE OF LANGUAGE**, by Henry F. Pommer and William M. Sale, Jr., New York, F. S. Crofts & Co., 1947. 258 pp.

In this engaging and unhackneyed work Messrs. Pommer and Sale have combined a brief treatise on the Nature of Language with chapters on the Grammar of English, the Elementary Principles of Rhetoric, and Matters of Form. There are also exercises at the back of the book. Its stimulating approach reminds one of the works of the late Henshaw Ward; but while the superior student and his teacher may take great delight in the discussion of the objective "who" and the emphatic accusative (although the authors do not call it that) after the verb "to be", the immature plodder may find himself more than ever befuddled.

R. BALFOUR DANIELS  
University of Houston

**ESSAYS OF SHAKESPEARE—**  
An Arrangement by George Coffin Taylor, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), 144 pp. \$2.50.

Quotations from Shakespeare's plays and sonnets are here put together in essay form by a scholar of remarkable memory. His aim is to show Shakespeare as a thinker in a better way than his thoughts do when scattered among many characters and plays. For those who are interested in their setting and authenticity, a key to the passages is appended giving the source of each essay by lines.

The whole results in something like Bacon's *Essays* and would go far to support Chesterton's private theory that Shakespeare wrote Bacon's works. It sounds surprisingly like Shakespeare throughout. This neat little volume is like cod liver oil concentrate — the sunshine is there, but the form is strange.

J. G. E.

## WHAT GOES ON?—

(Continued from Page 1)

tters of approximately eighteen weeks each. A little more than one period a week will be devoted to discussion of such matters as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure, which he has heard about most of his life but has never seen much point to understanding. These topics will be discussed somewhat more frequently early in the course than during the second semester. In preparation for such sessions of the class, it is fairly

likely that he will be assigned exercises of a sort with which he is already painfully familiar — "practice leaves," sentences to correct, and so on.

Almost every week during the first semester he will be required to hand in an original theme; during the second semester theme assignments may not be quite so frequent. Two or three times each semester he may have to turn out a theme during the class period. He will probably have to write out corrections on his themes after his instructor has read and graded them. Discussion of themes and of such mysteries as unity, coherence, and emphasis will occupy almost exactly one period a week. His instructor will confer with him privately about his themes as frequently as he can find the time to do so — usually that will not be very often.

About one day out of four — probably less than that the first semester but more frequently the second — he will be assigned to read a certain number of pages of "literature." Depending upon the college and the section in which our freshman finds himself, his reading may be selected from works ranging from the classics (*The Odyssey*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Hamlet*, *Walden*) to an article from the current issue of *Readers' Digest*. In many instances it will be assigned primarily to excite his

interest and stimulate class discussion (selections from *The Republic*, *Middletown*, or an anthology of recent periodical articles and short stories).

In about one college out of five, our student will spend two or three weeks getting a smattering of history of the language and semantics. He may also spend a little time learning the use of the library, studying forms of business letters, and so on. Although the

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## BOOK NOTE

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whole course is designed to be utilitarian, our average student, having got along all right so far with his inadequate grasp of the skills it seeks to develop, sees little point in taking it too seriously.

If such a course does not sound particularly interesting, it should be remembered that its content and emphasis are largely dictated by the inability of the average entering student to read and write simple English prose effectively. The quality of instruction he gets in

Freshman English is further limited by the necessity of spreading small appropriations for salaries thin among enough teachers, whatever their qualifications, to provide an instructor for each section. English departments would like to do a more effective job.

It would seem that two things might be done to improve the course in Freshman English. Both are administrative. First, to raise the rather low objectives implicit in the courses as they have been reported. Second, to appropriate more money for departmental salaries and to assign more hours and rooms in the class schedule.

GEORGE L. SIXBEY

Centenary College of Louisiana  
(Limitations of space forced editorial pruning of many illustrative details. Ed.)

Does not Professor Sixbey's account of what goes on in English I suggest the desirability of more than administrative changes?—Editor.

#### SURVEY COURSE—

(Continued from Page 1)

lected ourselves and had mimeographed.

To this part of their work the students respond for the most part with interest. I do not mean that all like what they read; far from it. Their immediate reactions furnish the subject matter of their first themes, and the themes in turn the basis of further class discussion. At the end of the term each writes a longer paper.

In this work we try to keep

constantly before the student two points: (1) the way in which this American literature was created out of what the America and the Americans of the time were, and (2) the values that were apparently the existing ones, and the angry demand for others, cultural and economic, that seemed to the writers not to exist in America.

The next step is to go back into the past. We go back to Greece. We use either the Iliad or the Odyssey, three tragedies and a comedy. In addition students buy Edith Hamilton's mythology. We try to make students see what happened in Greece as a result of the conflict of religion and science; why Euripides' ideas on the gods are so different from those of Homer, even of Aeschylus; how the questionings of the Sophists, their theories on the secular origin of morals, relativity of knowledge, and individualism represent a development of the sort that produced the questioning and criticism in America during the period between the wars.

For the Roman period we use the Aeneid. Of all the peoples of the past, the Romans seem to be closest to American students. The romantic elements in Greek and Roman writing, particularly in the work of Ovid, provide a background for the study of medieval romance. At times we have used Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; at present we use Aucassin and Nicolette. For another important aspect of medievalism we have used the Inferno. This is, I think, the least successful of the readings. The Middle Ages seem more remote than Greece, certainly more remote than Rome.

The course closes with reading in the Renaissance period, which of course means Shakespeare. In the past we have also used a selection of biblical literature between the Greek and Roman readings.

This year we have an innovation, a text book. Last year the freshmen purchased seventeen different items ranging in price from five cents to several dollars. We felt we had to select a text this year and are using Hibbard's *Writers of the Western World*, which contains more of the items we wanted than any other one thing that we could find.

What success we have depends, I think, not only on how well we can remember our goals, but also on how well we can remember and convey the truth that this is literature, these are human beings, and

that neither literature nor human beings can be simplified into mere goals, into mere illustrations of ideas.

WINIFRED M. VAN ETTEN  
Cornell College  
(Mt. Vernon, Iowa)

\*A paper read at the Iowa Colleges Conference on English, St. Ambrose College, October 10-11, 1947.

#### FUNCTIONS—

(Continued from Page 1)

A consideration of what we are educating people for these days may help us to determine the function of the English department and the aim of English studies. I have said that English studies should teach and delight and do both for the relief of man's estate. Therefore, we must offer pleasure and profit of the highest sort and in terms of the greatest needs of today. By profit I do not mean the short-term profit of English 106, Radio Script Writing, credit 2 hours, and by pleasure I do not mean Professor Snook's snap course in Browning or the fine show Professor Front can put on in Drama 116. Profit and pleasure can be made inseparable in the development of disciplines of thinking, in determining intellectual honesty, in freedom from claptrap emotionalism, in hard-won wisdom, in newly-awakened sensitiveness to those less obvious capacities for delight, wonder, pity, sorrow, and joy, and in the ability to relate what we read to our own world.

In order to achieve this sense of the immediacy of what we do as well as to achieve the sense of long-range value, it seems to me that it is the function of the English department to present at least three types of courses which should fulfill these aims, to evaluate the nature of the major in the field, to urge graduate schools to train teachers with a broader concept of the problems which an educated man must face today, and to demand from the English faculties themselves an honest and constant appraisal of their work.

The first problem which confronts the English department is that of the first-year course. Shall it be a stereotyped course in grammar review? The daily theme? Description, narration, exposition? Over the syllabus for such a course live departments labor constantly. Methods will vary from a course such as Colgate has to a course

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such as Hiram College develops. But whatever the method, its first function is to **teach people the use of words as the tools of thought.** "For if we clearly consider what our intention is when we speak, we shall find it is nothing else but to unfold to others the thoughts of our own mind." Dante is as modern as Mr. Richards. A discriminating sense of what words mean enables a man to live in his environment of newspaper and radio with intelligence. When a freshman writes that "as medieval Knight lived in an ironclad armor and exposed his identity by lifting his visor" his powers of communication are somewhat limited. When in a September issue of the NEWSLETTER a business man complained about the inability of the highly specialized chemist to convey his ideas to laymen he cut the ground away from those who demand courses in English for Engineers or chemists. That type of course seems to me to offer short-term value and fails to teach the ones who may need it most, the wealth of words for the communication of all ideas. The second important function of the first year course is the development of a sense of logic and the place of logic in the organization of any ideas about a central theme. How it is done is the problem of every staff in terms of its student body. Logical organization of ideas is profitable in long-term values as well as in its immediate returns. This, too, the business world cries for, and I think it behooves the teachers of these first-year courses to emphasize the very common problems of the expression of ideas and the organization of material in every field. We have heard enough of the student who writes carefully for the English department and ignores all he has been taught in preparing papers in other fields. For this reason the first-year course which attempts to bring a correlation between fields of study by working with students in presenting papers in other courses is very defensible. If a course in English studies is to serve as Latin served in earlier times it must serve first as a tool for the expression of ideas. And this approach is more profitable than the highly specialized approach of offering a special English course for an already too specialized science.

The second type of course which fulfills the aim of profit and delight should be the course which presents literature for the continuous development of powers of discrimination. If students are to receive the profit

from reading, they must learn the strict discipline of criticism, evaluation, and interpretation: the exactness of the author's meaning. And in learning to read with discrimination, a student learns to interpret personal problems as well as social issues—if this is the aim of the teacher. Though I should not be one to teach *Macbeth* as a crime deterrent.

As for pleasure—need I comment? Probably I should. Because the choice of material becomes an endless question. It should be based on the relationship of literature to significant problems and *Aedipus Rex*, *Plato*, *Crime and Punishment* and countless other books are as significant to-day as yesterday. The obvious faults of great masters' courses and survey courses call for honest—and sometimes humiliating analyses of our success and failures. If student never comes back for more—something is very wrong indeed. He has found little profit and less pleasure.

In the third place it would seem to me to be the function of the college English department to show the interrelation of all fields of knowledge as they seek expression in literature, and to break down the vested interest of narrow departmentalism. History, philosophy, sociology, psychology, the natural sciences are all woven into literature. To be more specific, I believe that much profit and delight could be derived from courses, probably "period" courses, where a student is made aware of the social realities and complex problems of a time which would make him see history, literature, and philosophy or scientific thought as interrelated expressions of a culture which, like his own, faced the problem of moral codes of conduct and economic stress. As he glimpses the forces which moved that age, he may learn to look more intelligently on those complex problems which seem so bewildering in his own age. A Period course too often means a course in Victorian Poetry, or Seventeenth Century Poetry and implies that no one ever wrote prose. These courses should be worked out among departments unless you are fortunate enough to have a professor who can handle them. Courses of this type seem to belong naturally in the senior year. Would they be a more rewarding study than, let us say, the traditional course in *Beowulf* or Chaucer?

There is a need at present for a general overhauling of many an English department's concep-

tion of a program for majors. How far do the present requirements meet in any way the problem of the future teacher, graduate student, or the student who majors in English because he wants a cultural background? In planning the curriculum for an English major what constitutes genuine profit for the relief of their estate?

The demands of education to-day call for teachers who are prepared to present literature as it is related to the varied moral, economic, and social aspects of life and not merely as a bibliographical exercise. In order to prepare teachers to accept the challenge, to make—or keep—literature a humanistic study as the classics were for the Renaissance—the graduate schools must add to their scholarly discipline the equally important discipline of wide reading and critical interpretation. The graduate student must not remain ignorant of ways of approaching his contemporary literature, nor be unread in literature of other countries. When a group of instructors decided not to include Dante in a sophomore course because they felt they were unprepared to teach it, I appreciated their caution and the wisdom of the decision on other grounds, but I could only condemn the education which had permitted them to leave reputable schools with Ph.D. degrees, unfamiliar with the greatest and most beautiful expression of medieval wisdom. The gap between the under-

graduate and the product of our graduate schools must be narrowed. For the success of education depends on the men and women who teach it. To keep the English studies vital to men as sources of wisdom and strength in those private and public questions which confront us daily, the teacher must have the humanist's vision. "St. Socrates pray for us."

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# Chap Book

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## The Survival-Quotient in Teaching Literature

By

PAUL LANDIS

University of Illinois

MAY 6 1948

Durham, N. C.

THE teaching of literature in my title refers exclusively to undergraduate teaching, and the matter I propose to talk about is what and how much of that teaching survives in those who have been exposed to it. The significance of the pseudoscientific term—for which I know no authority in any jargon—will, I hope, become clear as I proceed, for it is meant to convey some sense of the confusion of values out of which the questions arise and to foreshadow the nature of my answers.

By undergraduate teaching I mean teaching of non-professional students, the great body of our students who will never become editors or writers or even teachers of literature, who will never use our instruction professionally. Not that there is no question there. I have known teachers of literature who taught practically everything else and whose literary culture seemed to have gone with the wind of the Ph.D. Thesis. But they present a different problem, a problem for the teachers of teachers of English, and though I engage with some enthusiasm in that form of selfpropagation, I don't like to think too much about it. It develops an uncomfortable feeling of having got my tail stuck in my mouth. Most of the work of any teacher of

literature is done with students who, for reasons not always clearly perceived, have been convinced that literature is an important part of their education no matter what they are going to do. Semester after semester they leave the university to go into business or to marry, to ride suburban trains to and from offices where they are concerned with inventories and sales and market reports, to dust and wash dishes and raise children, to become lawyers and doctors and airplane hostesses and citizens. Their working hours will be spent in specialized activity and what time is left will be largely taken up by the details of living with people just like themselves in a very small community. They will read some, but not very much. It is hard for us to realize it, but they will have more important things to do. And when in later years we look on those whom we nourished on Shakespeare and Wordsworth and Henry James, our disillusion is matched only by that of our colleagues in physical education when they survey the bulging figures and sagging muscles of those whom for a little time they had raised to physical tautness. It is no wonder that we ask ourselves what our work comes to, what remains of all the effort expended by teacher and student on literature. We would do well to take a leaf from physical education, for it is not on record that the muscle boys ever for a minute questioned the value of their wares or that they suggested turning their courses in gym into Ethics or American Democracy. Yet the survival-quotient is infinitely more measureable in their work than in ours.

In fact, in a very real sense, we condemn ourselves by asking the question. There is a basic validity in the medieval belief that

"there is knowledge God forbid  
More than man should own."

There are questions which should never be asked, not because they cannot be answered, but because he who asks the question indicates by it that he has lost the capacity to answer. Othello's tragedy is sealed by his question, "Why did I marry?" The answer to that question was plain as sunlight to him until he asked it, and once he asked it no light on earth was bright enough to pierce its mystery. When the answer requires faith, the question is likely to be fatal, and the teaching of literature—of the humanities in general—is a persistent act of faith. To question too seriously why we teach it or to seek to measure its value indicates a certain loss of faith and a



deluded confidence that the answer is attainable by other means. I should have no truck with these questions were it not for the fact that they are being asked and answered in ways that depress us at our work and seduce us from our mission. The suggestion of mathematical exactness in the term "survival-quotient" is meant to indicate that we are being forced to measure the incommensurable, to establish limited objectives for a limitless activity, to fix a price on that which has only value. It is time we told Alexander to get out of our sunlight.

The conqueror of our times is the "expert" and many of us sit shivering in his shadow. I have no more quarrel with the expert than Diogenes had with Alexander. For better or for worse our age requires experts. The rapid multiplication of fields of knowledge and the intensity of their cultivation have made us dependent upon specialists to produce and maintain the means of daily living. The need for experts in our complex world is obvious, but "expertism" is our besetting sin, for it entails the assumption that all problems are solvable, that every aspiration and activity of the human spirit can and should have a specific aim, that this aim is attainable, and that the value of everything is commensurate with its use in that specific attainment. It says to teachers of non-professional subjects: either decide on a specific and attainable objective for your stuff or stop taking up the students' time teaching them things they can never use. We teachers of literature can no more escape the zeitgeist than any of our contemporaries, but, in the nature of things, it is for us more of a haunting ghost than an informing spirit. We are seduced by it into devious paths, into teaching literature for the sake of citizenship, Americanism, democracy or to learn how to get along with our neighbors. Those of us who stick more grimly to our subject come off no better. We tell ourselves and the world that we are teaching literature to acquaint our students with the best books or that we are developing "taste." Each one of these aims is laudable in itself, but the minute any one of them becomes our conscious objective the result is depressing. For then one is conscious only of one of two things: how far he has fallen short of his destination or how insipid the place is when he gets there. If one is really travelling, every moment has its point. But, if one is going to Buffalo, even Cleveland won't do, and when one gets to Buffalo, it's scarcely worth the trouble.

I shall not say much about the social objectives, for in their pur-

suit, the "survival-quotient" is unimportant. The literature was thrown out at the start of the trip. We cannot make literature the handmaid of democracy, capitalism, communism, Americanism or even good citizenship without debasing her beyond recognition. But here the danger is doubled, for even the objective becomes distorted. What kind of democracy is that which can be taught? We are at present engaged in the enormous business of teaching democracy throughout the world with no conspicuously happy results. A little reflection should show us that no people on earth ever achieved democracy or got it back by being taught it. The very essence of it is the realization that there are good men who are not democrats. And citizenship, which sounds like such a lofty ideal, dissolves under our scrutiny. It means so many things, like doing one's jury service, keeping litter off the streets, obeying the laws and seeing that every one else does. It also means betraying your guest to the F. B. I. and turning over your neighbor or your father when he breaks the law. The simple fact is that a man is much more than a citizen as Prince Hal recognized when he saw Falstaff, as he thought, dead on the field of Shrewsbury and regretfully remarked: "I better could have spared a better man."

It is with the more purely literary aims, the knowledge of literature and the development of "Taste," that the question of what survives from our teaching forces itself upon us. Here at least we can measure our achievement. And the result is not encouraging. "Whether there be knowledge," we have been assured by St. Paul, "it shall vanish away." But we are not prepared to see it vanish so far so soon. As for taste, the slip is even more disappointing. We teach them Jane Austen and Thackeray and Shakespeare, and after they leave us they read *The Post* and murder stories. Obviously, by the criterion of taste, the survival-quotient of our teaching is low.

Now, much as I deplore certain aspects of this situation, I believe that our discouragement in it rests upon two false premises: 1, that one can measure what a student got from his courses in literature by what he reads after college, and 2, that the power and willingness to choose a "good" book is an important objective for the teaching of literature. I am on dangerous ground here, and I would not be misunderstood. I know that some books are better than others, and I should like to feel that my efforts as a teacher contributed to my students' choosing the best, but I am convinced that *how* one reads is vastly more important than *what* he reads, and that



the business of judging a book as good or bad bears about the same relation to reading as the game of bridge bears to living. They're good clean fun, but of no great significance. "A wise man," says Milton, "like a good refiner, can gather gold out of the drossiest volume . . . and will make better use of an idle pamphlet, than a fool will do of sacred Scripture." One of the few things we can be certain of about Shakespeare is that he read murder stories, for he gave them back to us as Othello, Macbeth, and Hamlet. Now I know that few of our renegades will refine such gold, but neither would they if they had read Shakespeare himself. The difference, as Milton emphasized, is not in the books read, but in the readers—in the man. It is the man who is the proper objective of all non-professional teaching, and of such teaching, literature has from the beginning been the heart.

But this means that we must look for the significant survival of our efforts in much besides the literary life of those whom we have taught. We cannot accept as its true index their failure to locate the "gems of wisdom" on quiz programs or the books that lie on their living-room tables. The place where our work survives, if it survives at all, is in the individual character of those who have passed through our classrooms, and it operates chiefly in those little, nameless, unremembered acts that make up the most of life. We cannot see that it is there, but we must believe that it is. No test can be devised which will isolate our contribution to the whole personality, and no survival-quotient can be struck.

Therefore we, as teachers of literature, must not be seduced by personal pride or by experts in educational efficiency into treating literature as a field of knowledge.

There is today a widespread movement to improve education by dividing our offerings into "fields of knowledge." Because we believe in equality when we can't get priority, and because the easy symbol of equality is arithmetical, we see to it that the student does an equal stint in each of the four fields: Physical Knowledge, Biological Knowledge, Social Knowledge, and Humanity (sic) Knowledge. It's hard to keep the fences in repair, but we can set up guards wherever there is a panel that won't stay up.

I have deliberately avoided the word *science* because it is a controversial word which to some conjures up the hope of the world and to others stands for the devil to which all our ills are due. I would not for a moment be misunderstood on that score. I bear no animus

against science, and I am especially anxious not to stir any. Therefore I have chosen its simple and unequivocal patronym, *Knowledge*. No one is against knowledge (whatever some may think of fact-finding boards). One may bear painful memories of the labor of getting it—unsightly callouses and old twinges in the mental sacroiliac from having wrestled with a root too deeply grown to be extracted; but these are honorable injuries suffered in a noble cause. Knowledge is like virtue; everyone is for it as everyone, including Coolidge's parson, is against sin. But it is also a plain and naked word. Unlike *science*, *knowledge* has not been to the beauty parlor, it wears no makeup, no attractive uniform. Everyone knows her for what she is, and therefore, you winced at the absurd phrase Humanity Knowledge. Biological knowledge, Physical Knowledge — these are recognizable and valued friends. We see more family resemblance between them than we used to, but we can still tell them apart except in the twilight. Social knowledge sounds a little strange—the face is familiar but the name is not quite right. She looks vaguely like what we used to know as history, but she's wearing the threadbare suit and dismal hairdo of economics and that wild light in her eyes which we used to recognize as politics, is obscured by the tinted glasses of Utopianism. But the unrecognizable monstrosity is Humanity Knowledge. Humanistic Knowledge is cleaner grammatically, but no more intelligible or attractive; and if we substitute for *Humanity* or *Humanistic* the word which embodies educationally the soul of the concept, Literature, we realize that in Literary Knowledge we see a corpse from which the soul has fled. I have gradually, it seems, transfigured our favorite academic figure of "fields of knowledge" into four somewhat unattractive muses. If we return now to the delving student and watch him sweating in that field of knowledge called Literature, we recognize the pathos of his effort. It is not that his labor goes unrewarded, but that the reward is so incommensurate with the effort. His field is overgrown with wild flowers which have a way of withering under cultivation. With methods taken from his work in other fields he can try to classify them, but they won't stay put; he can count their endless mutations, but when he deliberately crosses them to breed for some special characteristic, the seed is always sterile. He would enjoy, like Ferdinand, to sit under the cork tree and smell the flowers, but that is no way to till a field of knowledge, and he must bring goods to market at examination time. So he digs up the sweet grass, and



sometimes turns up a delicate but unnourishing truffle, seldom anything so satisfactory as a potato. Sometimes his spade hits against a hard metallic boulder that once was a star, but what can you do with a star you dig up except put it in a museum?

Here lies our chief danger as teachers of literature. Everything draws us away from the book — biography, history, literary influences, style, criticism, all these are easier to teach than literature itself, and each has its legitimate place. But our paramount business is to make the book a living experience. Nothing of the author's life is of the slightest significance except as it illumines the book. Literary history is a chancy thing at best, and at most a minor chapter — for all its glory — in the chronicle of the race. To disentangle the threads of Renaissance philosophies in *The Fairie Queene* or to track its even more complex allegory through Elizabethan fears and prejudices is a pleasant and refined game for the literary sophisticate, but it is worse than trivial for the students we are trying to reach with literature if it is allowed for a minute to obscure the gorgeous colors, the endless magic of invention, the flash of phrase, and "the linked sweetness long drawn out", not of the verse only, but of the star-struck spirit of Edmund Spenser. But it is hard to ask questions about these things, and when one tills a field one must reap crops.

For some of us it is great fun to take a book apart, but even we must realize that it is more important to take it to heart. It is better to read a poor book vividly than a good one coldly; and I should rather develop in my students Sir Walter Scott's power to read a dull novel with delight than cultivate in them Mr. Cleanth Brook's capacity to analyze *The Grecian Urn*. It doesn't matter much what the mind takes hold of in the poem if the poem produces no catch in the throat.

The hardest thing we have to do—and the one most worth doing—is to get students to experience a book — to surrender their pride and their prejudice, their fear of their own inability and of our questions, to subdue their desire to seek what they ought to get to the thrill of satisfaction at what they find. If we can get them to do that, they will not only be more fond of good books, they will derive more from all books. But what they derive will be as little apparent as the vitamins they ate for breakfast—and even more vitalizing.

No, literature among the fields of knowledge is incongruous. I

would not be understood to scorn knowledge of literature. As I said earlier, knowledge is a good thing, and we are all for it. I mean only to insist that knowledge is the least important thing about literature, and that for the purpose of educating men and women knowledge of literature is of infinitely less importance than knowledge of plants and beetles and diet and atomic structure. Literary knowledge is a luxury, and few men live long enough or freely enough to indulge heavily in it; certainly among the millions we are trying to educate their number is negligible.

But as we all know, education is more than gathering knowledge. Our faith in knowledge has lately had a rude awakening. We have realized for a long time that our knowledge was outdistancing our capacity to utilize it, that our very enlightenment was reducing us steadily to the state of the Bandar-Log. But it was a long process and there seemed always hope that we might catch up. All that changed when it was demonstrated that at one small but significant point man's knowledge had penetrated to the heart of things. The stupendous significance of the atomic bomb was the revelation that man, in his search for knowledge, had discovered power — not water power or electric power or steam power — but the thing itself, and had demonstrated that he could use it. Paradoxically, that blinding light over Hiroshima showed not the glory of knowledge but the lonely figure of one man — Everyman—Anyman—the “Man against the sky”, “Like the last god going home unto his last desire.” All the knowledge gathered in all the centuries since Renaissance man stepped out of the Middle Ages had shown in one blinding flash that the only significant thing on earth is a human individual. And we are worried now about saving this man from his own knowledge. Why is he worth saving? Certainly not for the sake of knowledge or of truth. For all knowledge and truth are meaningless without that man dozing there in his galluses and slippers after supper. He is the ultimate value, and he is a being with the capacity to love and be loved, to fear and hate and be gay, to mourn and to take delight. To him the sun is more than warmth and the birdsong more than conditioned vibrations because he has a limitless capacity to respond to life.

That capacity it is the business of general education, whatever else it does, to expand and develop, not into a chemist or a critic or a college professor—those are accidental sidelines—but into a full man. For it is only the character that gives point to knowledge.



Out of his responses to life man has developed concepts—we call them ideals because they are truths beyond knowledge, and literature is their repository. Literature is a world wherein man can see clearly that life which is so often obscured in this world by the business of living. It is a world not pieced together by knowledge, but created by the spirit of man, where the forest of Arden is as real as the Boar's Head Tavern and Doll Tearsheet is as right as Rosalind. You don't learn about that world, you live in it, become familiar with it, and you can say of your experience as Goethe did of Winckelman: "One learns nothing from him, but one becomes something."

Not long ago a colleague said to me, not without malice! "Seniors laugh at how little they know about Shakespeare. They took it, they say, and enjoyed it, but they don't remember much about it." The comment was meant as a criticism of our system and method of education—of our laxity in admitting almost anyone to the study of Shakespeare and of the futility of our instruction. But it touched me in a very delicate spot. Nevertheless, I found that my reaction was neither to rise to the defense of my instruction, nor to lament the hours spent in casting pearls, nor to berate the callous and unscholarly attitude of the seniors. Even the laughter seemed to me less humanly reprehensible than the more flattering regret would have been. Seniors are young, and regret is sure to come. But even when regret does come, it is a feeling the experience of which is more salutary than the expression. What I found myself attacking was the premise upon which the criticism was based, a premise which underlies much of the criticism of our education, and which vitiates much of our teaching, especially in the humanities. The premise that the value and effectiveness of education can be measured, either by outside agency or by the individual himself by appeal to conscious memory.

Now, I will not go so far as to say that it is better to forget than to remember. I am old enough to regret and entirely too old to be surprised at the faithlessness of memory. My young critic was indeed not much older than the seniors he quoted, not old enough perhaps to be aware of the facility with which the memory drops not only Shakespeare and the formulas of trigonometry and the distinction between Descartes and Hume, but the name of the family who last year lived next door and what the quarrel was about that time the heart broke on midsummer eve 1926—or was it '28? Certainly he, like many critics of education, did not realize that this habit of

the mind is not only not altogether bad, but in some respects downright serviceable and enlightening. The experience of sorrow is more significant than the specific cause, which is often silly and usually irrational; the family next door does not move out of one's life with its name. The experience remains in a hundred ways, buried amid that mass of understanding of men which we so laboriously accumulate. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," and the realization of that wisdom is in no way dependent on remembering that Juliet spoke the line in the balcony scene.

Because so many educators and teachers show by their criticism and their faith in the machinery of tests and measurements that they do not understand this, it seems worth while to emphasize now and then that in the realm of the humanities (1) it is more important to have known than to remember; (2) it is often only after knowledge has receded from the conscious memory that it becomes significant or even serviceable; and (3) that no one, least of all the individual in question, can accurately measure what he has "got" from a poet or a philosopher, a course in Latin, a Victorian novel, or a semester in the middle ages.

It has been only since liberal scholarship lost its amateur standing that to remember has come to be more important than to have known. The distinguishing mark of the professional scholar is that he can cite the source of every fact and idea which he dares to use. He may, and often does, display other and more attractive qualities of mind, but that which sets him apart as a "professional" among educated men is the ability to tag every picture, locate every line, and cite for every idea the source, preferably obscure, from which it sprang. There is nothing reprehensible in this, and the knowledge which the professional scholar accumulates is, like all knowledge, of inestimable value — inestimable, because no one can ever guess in what mind what detail will find the soil in which it can take root and burst into living green. No one who has made the acquaintance of Socrates would willingly give him up, but surely it is a distortion of values to hold that it is more important to cite Socrates than to "know thyself." Of what significance is the listing of seventeen literary sources for *The West Wind* compared with the realization of that spirit "tameless and swift and proud?" Those sources may be valid, but if Shelley had remembered them, he never could have written the poem; and until the poem was written they were as superfluous as the hair he shaved from his chin. They had to sink

into the limbo of forgotten things before they could spring to life at the touch of the wild west wind. It is good to think Plato's noble thoughts with Plato and to know that he is at your elbow, but surely the name is less important than the spirit of free speculation, and what harm can come to you or Plato if you think his thoughts as yours? Hazlitt was a better scholar than most of those who locate and correct his quotations, for the resources of his mind rose spontaneously to form and support his attitudes, and if they generally wore Hazlitt's livery instead of their original master's, that is the true communism of the mind. That is the attitude of the amateur scholar. For by amateur I do not mean the careless and slipshod, but the true lover; and the refrain of the true lover has always been:

My true love hath my heart and I have his.

He does not use what he loves; he becomes it, and it is he. "Whatever acts upon you," wrote Elizabeth Barrett, "becomes *you*—and whatever you love or hate, whatever charms you or is scorned by you, acts on you and becomes *you*."

In fact it is only when knowledge has become a part of one, when it has receded from the conscious mind to join the very roots of nature, so that it can emerge unsummoned to enrich and interpret experience—it is only then that it becomes transmutable into human values. That only nourishes which is assimilated, and that which has been assimilated has lost its identity. Ariel's song to Ferdinand is the history of all assimilated knowledge.

Full fadom five thy father lies,  
Of his bones are coral made;  
Those are pearls that were his eyes;  
Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.

Some sea-change occurs inevitably in every mind. Happy the one in which the bones and jellies of knowledge are transmuted into jewels.

Well-meaning citizens are attempting to make good Americans by means of a statute requiring every student to take a course in American history. It is good to know American history because it is good not to be ignorant and because it is especially good to know oneself. But if the knowledge so gained is to make good Americans, it must go beyond knowledge to the roots of being and arise as the



spirit of free but faulty men dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Only that knowledge which goes too deep to be recalled at will is capable of serving without summons. It is the virtue of liberal scholarship, as it is of tradition, that it operates constantly and of its own volition, like the conscience of the educated mind.

So it is that no one can ever measure what he, or anyone else got from a book or a course, and to try to do so is to distort the value of liberal scholarship. The question, what do I get from it? comes from the stomach, not the soul. So I am not worried nearly so much about the seniors who have forgotten their Shakespeare as I am by those teachers of literature who take their statement seriously. Certainly the students have forgotten the sources of *The Merchant of Venice*; they are not sure whether Dogberry is in *Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Much Ado* — or maybe it grows on Prospero's island for Caliban to pick. What of that? Shakespeare knew they would when he made Fluellen speak of "the fat knight with the great-belly doublet—I have forgot his name." The names go, but the fat knight and the troubled son of Denmark and the humbled old king of Britain remain unnoticed to serve, not on call, but at need, like Barbara, whose half-forgotten willow song on one particular night would not go from Desdemona's mind. For books do not go into the mind whole, their covers stiff about them—that is the way they go into a library. In the mind the binding dissolves, the table of contents fades away, the characters wander freely about like Antony and Cleopatra among the ghosts, and ideas merge with each other and lose their identity like summer clouds above a lake. Dean Swift was not distinguished for his confidence in the human mind, yet he wrote what is at once the most perfect and most hopeful statement of the value of books and the nature of liberal knowledge: "If a rational man reads an excellent author with just application, he will find himself extremely improved, and perhaps insensibly led to imitate that author's perfection, although in a little time he should not remember one word in the book, nor even the subject it handled; for books give the same turn to our thoughts and way of reasoning that good and ill company do to our behavior and conversation; without either loading our memories or making us even sensible of the change."

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